GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:856
ANSWERED ON:06.12.2004
MALPRACTICES IN PDS
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Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of persons identified as living below poverty line in the country;

(b) the criteria adopted for the identification process;

(c) whether malpractices are rampant in the public distribution system;

(d) if so, whether directions have been issued to the State Governments to check such malpractices;

(e) if so, the steps taken thereon; and

(f) the action being taken by the Government to streamline the above system and make it more accessible to the poor?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH)

(a) Under the Targetted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the State Governments/UTs have identified and issued ration cards to 8.14 crore BPL families.

(b) : The guidelines issued to the State Governments/UT Administrations for identification of BPL families under TPDS, provides for identification of only the really poor and vulnerable sections of the society such as, landless agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, rural artisans/craftsmen such as porters, tappers, weavers, blacksmith, carpenters, etc. in rural areas and slum dwellers and persons earning their livelihood on a daily basis in the informal sector like porters, rickshaw pullers, hand-cart pullers, fruit and flower sellers on the pavement etc. in urban areas. They have also been advised to actively involve the Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas in the identification of eligible families, as they are close to the beneficiaries.

(c): The TPDS functions through a vast network and caters to people living in all parts of the country. As such the possibility of some malpractices occurring cannot be ruled out.

(d), (e) & (f) : Under the Targetted Public Distribution System(TPDS), the supervision and monitoring the functioning of FPSs rests with the concerned State Governments/UTs. Streamlining the PDS in the country, making it more accessible to the poor and taking corrective steps is an on going process. However the following measures have been taken to strengthen the system:

(i): The State Governments and the Union Territory Administrations have been asked to actively involve the Panchayati Raj Institutions to monitor the functioning of the Fair Price Shops, as a measure of social audit;

(ii): The States and Union Territories have also been asked to constitute Vigilance Committees on the PDS at the State, District, Block and FPS levels;

(iii): With a view to efficiently reaching PDS commodities to the consumers in a transparent manner, a model Citizens` Charter has been issued by the Central Government for adoption by the State Governments/UT Administrations;

(iv): In order to strengthen the hands of the State Government, the Public Distribution System (Control) Order, 2001 has been issued on 31st August, 2001 under section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 with a view to curb willful adulteration, substitution, diversion etc. of the PDS commodities. An offence committed in violation of the provisions of the Order shall invoke criminal liability under the EC Act.

(v): A Task Force has been constituted to look into irregularities in the implementation of the TPDS

and the Antyodaya Anna Yojana in the identified areas. The shortcomings/irregularities noticed by the Task Force Teams are forwarded to the concerned State Governments and Union Territory Administrations for corrective action.